

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 662

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, NI

SUBJ: NEW REGIME TAKES HARD LINE ON CORRUPTION

SUMMARY: SINCE JULY 29 COUP, PRESS HAS CLAMORED FOR PUNISHMENT AND/OR SEIZURE ASSETS THOSE OFFICIALS GOWON ADMINISTRATION WHO GUILTY CORRUPTION. NEW FMG LEADERSHIP HAS COME OUT FIRMLY AND OFTEN AGAINST ABUSE AND MISUSE PUBLIC OFFICE. NEW STATE GOVERNORS HAVE BEGUN CLEANING HOUSE WITH GROWING NUMBER DISMISSALS. MUHAMMED-LED FMG MAY HOPE DISMISSAL OFFICIALS WILL SATISFY PUBLIC RELATIONS REQUIREMENTS AND THUS AVOID POLITICAL PITFALLS PUBLIC INVESTIGATIONS HIGH-LEVEL MILITARY AND CIVILIAN MEMBERS PREVIOUS REGIME. END SUMMARY.

1. EVERY SINCE LAST MONTH'S COUP, NIGERIAN PRESS AND STUDENT GROUPS HAVE BEEN CLAMORING FOR COUNTRY'S NEW LEADERS PUNISH CORRUPT OFFICIALS OF GOWON ADMINISTRATION. SEIZURE OF ASSETS FORMER OFFICIALS MOST PREVALENT RALLYING CRY FOR THESE ADVOCATES CLEAN GOVERNMENT. NEW HEAD OF STATE, BRIGADIER MURTALA MUHAMMED HAS SEVERAL TIMES COME OUT VERY STRONGLY AGAINST CORRUPTION AND ABUSE PUBLIC OFFICE.

2. RESULT OF THIS ATTENTION (AND PERHAPS INTENTION) IS GROWING SPATE OF DISMISSALS STATE OFFICIALS. MEMBERS STATE EXECUTIVE

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COUNCILS HAVE BEEN FIRED BY NEW GOVERNORS. SEVERAL STATE HEADS

HAVE TAKEN LINE THEY IN NO RPT NO HURRY APPOINT NEW COMMISSIONERS BUT RATHER ARE TAKING TIME SEARCH FOR GOOD PEOPLE. IT APPEARS THAT NUMBERS OF OFFICIALS GETTING THE AXE WILL INCREASE. FOR EXAMPLE, BENUE-PLATEAU GOVERNOR COL. ABDULLAHI MOHAMMED ADMINISTRATION HAS SACKED ALL CHAIRMEN STATE-OWNED CORPORATIONS, COMPANIES AND BOARDS. NO REASON WAS GIVEN BUT PRESS DEFTLY RECALLED MOHAMMED'S NEWS CONFERENCE LAST WEEKEND IN WHICH HE MENTIONED REPORTS WRONGDOING AND MISMANAGEMENT IN STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES. STATUATORY CORPORATION HEADS IN MID-WEST STATE ALSO DISMISSED.

3. YESTERDAY CAME ALLEGATION THAT FORMER EAST CENTRAL STATE ASIKA ADMINISTRATION HAD FRAUDULENTLY MISAPPROPRIATED SOME FOUR MILLION NAIRA. WHILE ASIKA HIMSELF NOT YET CHARGED (ALTHOUGH HE HAS LONG HAD REPUTATION FOR CORRUPTION AND SELF AGGRANDIZEMENT), THE "GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT" ALLEGES SOME STATE OFFICIALS IN COLLUSION WITH PRIVATE "BUSINESSMEN" HAD FALSIFIED INVOICES, RECEIPTS, PAYROLLS, ETC. TO DEFRAUD THE STATE GOVERNMENT. THE YEARS DURING WHICH OFFENSES ALLEGED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE (1970/71 AND 1971/72 FINANCIAL YEARS) PLUS SHORT TIME SINCE LAST MONTH'S COUP WOULD INDICATE THE INVESTIGATION WAS BEGUN WHILE ASIKA STILL IN OFFICE.

COMMENT: IT MAY BE THAT NEW LEADERSHIP FMG HOPES THAT PUBLIC CONDEMNATION CORRUPTION AND DISMISSAL EXPENDABLE CIVILIAN OFFICIALS WILL SATISFY PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECTS OF POPULARLY HELD BELIEF PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION RIDDLED WITH CORRUPTION. ACTUAL INVESTIGATIONS OR SEIZURE ASSETS HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS FORMER REGIME WOULD BE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. THERE WOULD BE NO BETTER WAY GENERATE ENMITY FORMER MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERS (WHO HAVE BEEN RETIRED) THAN TO SUBJECT THEM TO INDIGNITY PUBLIC INVESTIGATIONS AND LOSS SOME OR ALL THEIR ASSETS. SUCH COURSE OF ACTION WOULD ALSO RUN RISK OF COUNTERCHARGES ALLEGING CORRUPTION ON PART SOME MEMBERS NEW LEADERSHIP OPENING REAL CAN OF WORMS. PUBLIC CLAMOR AND STRONG ANTI-CORRUPTION STANCE NEW REGIME MAY FORCE PROSECUTION AND PUNISHMENT SOME LESSER OFFICIALS, HOWEVER. SOME OF THOSE EAST CENTRAL STATE FUNCTIONARIES CAUGHT WITH HANDS IN TILL MIGHT BE LIKELY CANDIDATES.

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## Message Attributes

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